MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • NOVEMBER 1999

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SUSAN CEE WINEBERG

Antique Toys On Display For The Holidays

The Museum will be open two weekends during the holidays, December 4 and 5 and 11 and 12 from 2-5. The Colburg Doll House made by Lewis Hodges will be on display along with Ralph Beebe's collection of mechanical toys from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Pat Austin's collection of Story Book Dolls from the 1940s and Karen O'Neal's extensive 19th century toy collection. The house will be decorated with period artifacts so please stop by, check us out, and help us raise money to open the museum on a more permanent basis.

PATRICIA THOMPSON

The Garden Is Put To Bed

The planting season at MOMS ended in a grand finale with a truly special gift of historic peonies from the University of Michigan Nichols Arboretum. This plant sharing from one of the foremost peony gardens in the nation not only recognizes our status as a museum, but also honors the "sister" house relationship of the Burnham House (1837 and also moved from Wall Street) and our Kellogg-Warden House (1835-39). The Burnham House is now the Raeder Urban Environmental Education Center adjacent to the peony garden. I would like to thank Inger Schultz, Arb Development Officer, for arranging this donation and Guy Smith, Horticulturist, for his time and efforts in selecting the turn-of-the-century varieties. We now have double, single and Japanese peonies which should bloom next May including "Grover Cleveland" (a double red) honoring the man who was our 22nd and 24th president.

Further progress was made on the gardens with the help of Grace Shackman who planted and mulched in preparation for the pancake supper. Late season additions were the fragrant white *Hosta plantaginea*, popularly known as the "August lily," blue monkshood, sea lavender, cleome, and the old reliable clematis "Ernest Markham" with magenta flowers for the Main St. fence. The brick edging had been completed around the house as has the cobblestone drainage edging by the driveway.

Many people have been curious about how to select and then find plants appropriate for their home's era or plants no longer in fashion but having interesting features such as the acanthus at MOMS. Fortunately, there has been a resurgence of interest in heirloom plants and many resources are available. Lisa Black has stocked the gift shop at MOMS with three books which cover the range of approaches. *Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings* by Favretti and Favretti is an excellent guidebook for researching historical periods and contains lists of hundreds of plants grouped by their periods of popularity. *Heirloom Flowers: Vintage Flowers for Modern Gardens* by Tovah Martin describes the history, folk-lore and cultivation of the most popular cottage garden flowers and contains lovely photographs plus a state directory of resources as well as mail-order seed, bulb and plant re-

Continued on page 2.

PATRICIA THOMPSON

The Garden . . .

(Continued from page 1.)

sources. The third book is *Grandmother's Garden: The Old-fashioned American Garden 1865-1915* by May Brawley Hill. The author is an art historian who traces the evolution of American garden style using period paintings, photographs, letters, diaries and other historical material. She covers such subjects as artists and literary figures, laborers' gardens, women's changing role in gardening, regional diversity and westward migration, including a chapter on the Midwestern "frontier" which discusses Michigan. This is a beautiful book with exquisite paintings and would make a great Christmas present for anyone interested in art, history, travel and of course, gardening!

I invite anyone interested in helping next spring and anyone who has old photographs or information regarding gardens and nurseries in the late 19th and early 20th century in Washtenaw County to contact me at 663-8976 or Pauline Walters at MOMS.

Docents Needed

We are looking forward to being open on a regular basis. To do this we will need much volunteer help. If you would be interested in being a docent at the Museum one or more afternoons a month, please call Pauline at 662-9092. In January we will get together to organize an active group of volunteers.

Knapp's Points

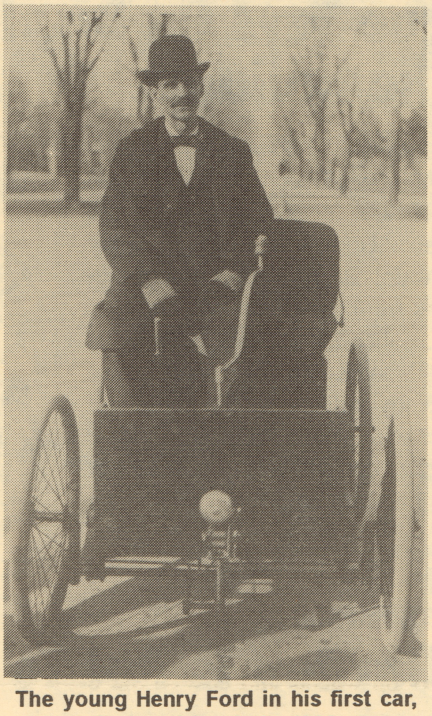
Please keep sending Esther Warzynski your Knapp's Points. She has collected over 2000 points since August but still needs 7000 points by December 31! Her address is 1520 Martha, Ann Arbor, 48103. Thanks to all who have faithfully sent them in to date!

Artifacts To Donate

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS should contact Collections Chair Judy Chrisman at (734) 769-7859. You can also write to her at 1809 Dexter Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. You will be sent an acquisitions form for tax purposes.

DAVID L. LEWIS

Henry Ford: Legend, Legacy and Local Landmarks



The young Henry Ford in his first car, the quadricycle in 1896.

On Sunday October 17th, David L. Lewis, Professor of Business History at the UM Business School since 1965, spoke to a packed audience of almost 70 people at the Bentley Library. Lewis, the author of more than 450 articles and 7 books on Ford and auto-related topics, has degrees from the University of Illinois, Boston University and the University of Michigan where he obtained a Ph.D. in economic history. He noted in his introductory remarks that his father for years was president of his local county historical society and later of the Illinois State Historical Society and that it was special for him to be talking to us for that reason. His talk was illustrated by many slides, which showed the many sides of Michigan's "most famous citizen." All photographs are from the Henry Ford Museum/ Greenfield Village.

"Henry Ford casts a long shadow over his company and this area, and some of his views and deeds have a bearing on company policy and Southeastern Michigan to this day. Ford headed his company for 42 years---from 1903 until 1945, and his grandson Henry II led it another 34 years, from 1945 until 1979. Together these two men wrote a great deal of auto history.

For Henry Ford, life began at almost 40, in 1901, when his racing exploits placed his name on sports pages and he began to attract attention outside of Detroit. He made two false starts as an auto manufacturer before organizing the Ford Motor Company in 1903. Within a decade he and his firm dominated the auto industry.

Controversial, paradoxical, and colorful, Ford was an enigma. An idealistic pioneer in some respects, he was a cynical reactionary in others. His behavior was totally unpredictable. 'History', Ford said, 'is more or less bunk' yet he went on to build the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, both great depositories of Americana. He also constructed the world's biggest auto factories in Highland Park, Michigan; along the Rouge River which once comprised 34 integrated factories and employed more than 100,000 workers; and the Willow Run Bomber Plant--- the world's largest building under one roof when completed in 1942. While building huge factories, Ford also found delight in rehabilitating old mills and operating small hydropower plants including his Sharon Hollow Mill west of Ann Arbor.

Although a lifelong friend of African-Americans, (he underwrote research by George Washington Carver), he was a persecutor of Jews. His acceptance of a medal from Hitler's emissaries in 1938 prompted a Jewish boycott, the most complete ethnic boycott in U.S. history. Later, when his company expanded its business in Israel, there was an even more costly boycott by Arab League nations. One way or another, Ford's anti-Semitism cost the Ford Company billions of dollars, and strongly influenced company policy in multiple ways.

Henry Ford rose to the heights because of a number of outstanding qualities: native intelligence and common sense even though the latter occasionally failed him. He also had an intuitive mind which leaped beyond the present

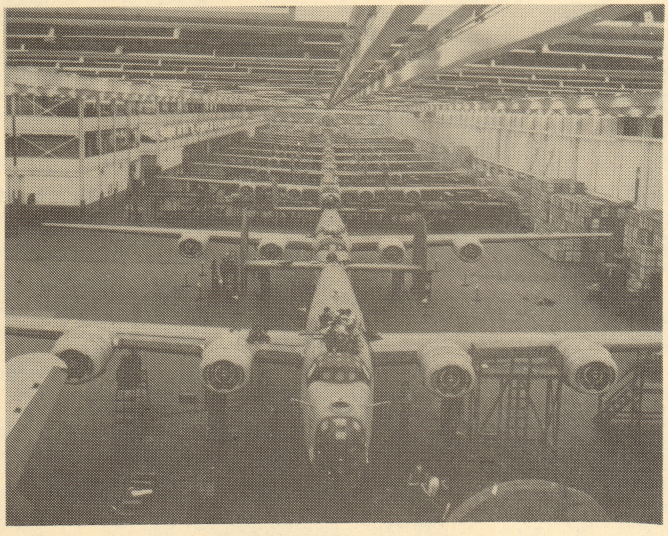
and a special engineering talent that combined creativity with practicality and a remarkable memory. He also had a missionary's zeal, and a lifelong capacity for hard work, especially thinking, which he described as 'the hardest work there is, which is why there is so little of it.'

Henry Ford also had, or made, his share of good luck. His entry into auto making and the introduction of his Model T were perfectly timed. He was teamed with James Couzens, the company's business manager, who contributed as much as Ford himself to their firm's early success. Though antagonists, Messrs. Ford and Couzens gathered together one of the finest management teams this country has ever known.

Henry Ford and his wife, Clara, had one son, Edsel. Henry loved Edsel but failing to remold him in the hardened image he preferred, gave him less than complete respect and sometimes treated him badly. Born in 1893, Edsel grew up with the Ford Motor Company. He was named president of the firm in 1918, but remained in his father's shadow. Competent and respected by fellow executives, Edsel gradually gained responsibility for styling, sales, and advertising, but never for labor relations, engineering, or manufacturing. In the 1930s the company would have benefited greatly had Henry Ford retired and his son been allowed to take complete charge of the firm.

Edsel and his wife Eleanor, had four children between 1917 and 1925—the oldest being Henry II and the others being Benson and William Clay. Benson, a Ford executive for many years, died in 1978. William Clay retired as vice-chairman in 1989 after 40 years of company service. Two fourth-generation Fords are now in policy making positions at the company. Henry Ford II's son, Edsel II, 50, retired as president of Ford Motor Credit company last year, and remains a director. William Clay Ford, Jr., 42, became company chairman in January of 1999. Personable and competent, he is expected to lead the company for a generation to come.

As noted earlier, Henry Ford's achievements and legacy have cast a long shadow on America, as well as the Ford empire. In this context, let's appraise Ford's most significant achievements: his Model T, mass production methods, and wage-price practices.



Willow Run Bomber Plant in Ypsilanti, ca. 1942.

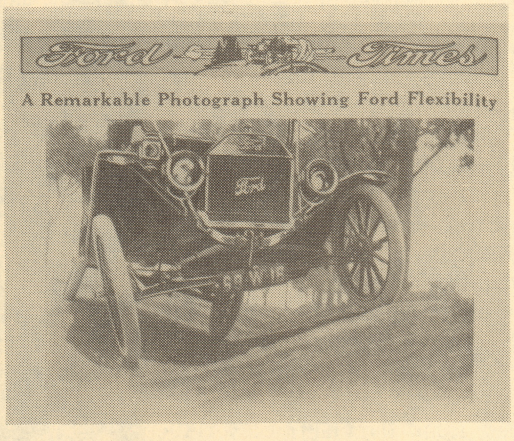
A technological marvel when introduced in 1908, the Model T, as much as all other cars combined, put this country on wheels and created the world's greatest industry. It also stands as one of the most versatile cars ever produced, and is generally regarded by auto historians and others as the most significant vehicle of all time. Last year LIFE magazine named the Model T the 17th most important event of the millennium.

Mass production quickly transformed industry in America, then around the world, enabling industrialized nations to enter the Age of Mass Consumption. Mass production thus brought about changes surpassing even those initiated by the Model T, itself a prime beneficiary of mass production. Mass production also, despite all the talk about lean production, automation, and robotics, remains the breakthrough of manufacturing breakthroughs. Mass production thus has contributed importantly to Henry Ford's legend and legacy.

Along with mass production, Ford perfected just-in-time production, which he called "inventory float," later reinvented by Toyota as "kanban." Mass production enabled Henry Ford to put into practice his third great achievement—overnight doubling the wages of his workers while reducing the workday from nine to eight hours and over time reducing car prices by two-thirds. As a consequence, workers could buy the cars they produced, setting the stage for millions of others to do likewise. The five-dollar day was the most publicized single event associated with Henry Ford, and it also is the most dramatic event in the history of wages. It will remain so until another company overnight doubles wages while reducing its workday.

Parenthetically, Ford, so paternalistic toward his employees in the 'teens, was organized labor's principal antagonist in the 1930s. The famed Battle of the Overpass during which UAW organized Walter Reuther was brutally beaten was only the most publicized of many clashes between company thugs and unionists. After a bitter four-year struggle, the company's workers voted to join the UAW. The battling bequeathed decades of primitive labor/management relations.

Henry Ford also left various institutional legacies, of which the most important is the Ford Motor Company, America's first vertically integrated, yet highly diversified industrial empire. In Henry Ford's day, the company, along with producing cars and trucks, also mined coal, iron ore and lead; owned sawmills and vast timber lands, and made a valiant effort to carve a rubber plantation out of the Brazilian jungle. The company also operated a railroad, blast furnaces, coke ovens,



The Famous Model T

Henry Ford II and Harry Bennett in Bennett's office, 1944.

foundries, steel mills and a fleet on the Great Lakes. In addition, the company produced glass, artificial leather, textiles, gauges, paper and cement. Ford also was the world's largest airplane manufacturer, building the Ford Trimotor, America's largest and leading passenger plane in its day. It is one of six planes honored by the Smithsonian for having molded commercial aviation.

Henry Ford's Fordson became the world's best-selling tractor in the early 1920s after considerable experimentation with tractors based on Model Ts including a rear-engine specimen which was driven off to the right. Henry Ford ruled out nothing, and would try anything, a thought I'd like to leave you with. Ford also bequeathed a number of visionary ideas that have found increasing acceptance over the years. One of them promoted a pioneering soybean processing plant. Another was the world's first plastic car, which Ford built in 1941. Ford was also a dedicated motor camper and was photographed camping with Harvey Firestone, Naturalist John Burroughs and Thomas Edison. Publicity on the Vagabonds, as they styled themselves, inspired a great increase in recreational motor travel in the U.S. and Ford could be regarded as one of the fathers of auto tourism.

Ford also was the only major employer of his era to hire African-Americans in skilled and supervisory jobs. The man pictured was employed as a lab analyst as early as 1919. He later became a foreman, having charge of six foremen and 400 workers, many of them white. At the time and indeed until the 1960s almost no other major industrial firm hired blacks in white-collar jobs. All of the company's African-American employees were paid the same as whites, an uncommon practice in the U.S. industry in Ford's day. Following Ford's death in 1947, the *Journal of Negro History* described him as 'a great benefactor of the Negro race, possibly the greatest that ever lived.'

A half-century after Ford's death we continue to observe the forces he set into motion. Because of them, he is widely viewed as one of this century's great visionaries and most influential figures. As the century and millenium come to a close, we are seeing and will continue to see additional evaluations of Henry Ford's place in history. Also important was his successor, grandson Henry II, who personified the company during his lengthy administration.

The "Deuce" was dutiful, putting Ford Motor Company foremost throughout his life. At the age of 26 in 1943 he was released from the Navy to rejoin the family firm. Becoming president at age 29 in 1945, Henry II purged the company of Ann Arborite Harry Bennett and a thousand of Harry's minions. Henry II then hired a mentor, Ernest R. Breech, and got the company back on track. Eventually Breech was nudged aside and Henry took full control of the company. He had a strong and abiding interest in overseas operations, long neglected by fellow executives and increasingly he channeled some of the company's best brains abroad, promoted stateside those who produced, and saw to it that international operations were encouraged and adequately funded.

Henry II built bridges for African-Americans from the time he joined the company. He also mended fences with Jews. He tried very hard to revitalize downtown Detroit; and certainly the Renaissance Center—now General Motors World Headquarters—would not have been built without him. In 1996, in memory of Henry II, the Ford Company renamed its World Headquarters the Henry Ford II World Center and installed a statue of the former chairman in the main lobby."

At this point in the slide show, Dr. Lewis returned to the senior Henry Ford and looked at various landmarks with which he was identified. He started with buildings that no longer exist, which include the Ford Rotunda, originally Ford's pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair of 1933 which was destroyed by fire in 1962. Another major loss was the Albert Kahn-designed building that served as Ford's headquarters from 1928 until 1956, then as HQ for Parts and Service and Lincoln-Mercury divisions. To the consternation of Ford history enthusiasts, it was razed in 1997. Vandals burned Edsel Ford's country home, Haven Hill, near Highland, about 30 miles northeast of Ann Arbor, in January of this year.

"Other buildings and artifacts associated with Ford's life remain including the Ford Company's 76-year old Engineer-

African-American foreman at the Rouge Plant

ing Lab, in which Henry Ford maintained an office. It continues to serve as an engineering facility. The George Washington Carver Lab, in which Dr. Carver conducted research sponsored by Henry Ford, is now part of a medical clinic. The Lincoln factory, built in 1917, now serves as a Detroit Edison warehouse. The house in which Ford was born was moved in 1944 from Ford and Greenfield Roads in Dearborn to Greenfield Village.

Sharon Hollow Mill, Wastenaw County

Ford's first car, his 1896 quadricycle, is a treasured possession of the Henry Ford Museum, and is driven on ceremonial occasions. The garage in which this car was built also was removed to Greenfield Village and stands across from Ford's birthplace. A bronze plaque from 1926 designated the 58 Bagley Ave., Detroit site on which the quadricycle was built until ripped off in the 1970s. A plastic plaque now marks the site.

Everyone is familiar with Fair Lane, the Dearborn estate on which Ford and his wife lived from 1915 until their deaths in 1947 and 1950 respectively. The estate's powerhouse, in which Ford maintained a workshop, now displays the magnate's personal cars and other historic Ford vehicles. Henry and Clara's "Honeymoon House" which Clara designed and Ford built was their home from 1891-92. It was moved from Dearborn to Garden City by the Ford employee to whom Ford gave the house. It has had its roof and porch decoration removed but otherwise is the same. The home in which the Fords lived from 1908 to 1915 is a private residence at 140 Edison Ave in Detroit.

Other landmarks of the Ford Motor Company include the Piquette Ave. plant in Detroit built in 1904, which is the oldest ex-auto factory in North America. It still looks the same today inside and out, even retaining on its walls the "No Smoking" signs that Henry Ford installed there 90 years ago! The Henry Ford Heritage Assn. is trying to save this building, not least because the Model T was designed in a room on the third floor.

Two Southeastern inns remain a part of Ford's legacy. Farmington's Botsford Inn which dates from the 1830s, was the site where Henry and Clara danced in the 1880s. They restored the inn in the 1920s and it remained one of Michigan's two oldest hostelries until it was sold recently to Botsford Hospital. Its future use is still uncertain. Ford built the Dearborn Inn to serve passengers at the nearby Ford Airport. Marriott now manages it. Downtown Detroit's Henry and Edsel Ford Auditorium was the home of the Detroit Symphony until Orchestra Hall was restored and re-opened. It now sits empty and forlorn next to Hart Plaza, waiting for a new lease on life.

Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital, built in the teens, continues to serve the metropolitan area. The Henry Ford Centennial Library, opened in 1968 thanks to the Ford Foundation, has a Henry Ford Room which attracts students of Ford history. In addition to a statue of Ford in front of the library (note photo with Dr. Lewis) there are statues of Ford in England, Brazil, Georgia, and elsewhere in Dearborn.

Another unusual legacy of Henry Ford is the hydropower mills and plants that he restored. Many are still standing and in use. Six are on the Rouge River at Northville, Waterford, Plymouth, New-burgh and Nankin Mills. Also a pleasant drive from Ann Arbor are other mills and plants built or restored by Ford, and they can easily be toured within a day. We would start at the Saline Mill, now Weller's and drive to Manchester, then Sharon Hollow, Brooklyn, Tecumseh, Ford's country home in Macon and his Macon powerhouse, sawmill and Dynamic Kernels Mill, beautiful in all seasons (and co-owned by Board Member Karen O'Neal and her husband Joe). More mills nearby include those at Dundee, Milan, Rawsonville and the original Ypsilanti plant to which the Rawsonville Hydro Station supplied power. That plant is now hemmed in by a large factory and is the only plant that is off limits to the casual viewer.

Finally, there are the Fords' modest graves. Henry and Clara are buried in the small Ford Family Cemetery on Joy Road near Greenfield in Detroit, by St. Martha's Episcopal Church. Edsel and Eleanor are buried in Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery along with Benson. Henry Ford II's ashes were scattered over the Detroit River.

Of Ford's monuments perhaps the most poignant is in one of America's first shopping malls at Greenfield and Rotunda in Dearborn. Years ago, neighborhood residents, most of them Ford employees, put in place a four-foot high stone memorial to Ford. Atop the stone is a metal strip with five words, "The Shadow Passes, Light Remains"—a silent, enduring reminder that Henry Ford's legend and legacy live on."

Genealogical Society Meets

The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County will next meet Sunday December 5 at the Liberal Arts and Science Building, Lecture Hall #2 at Washtenaw Community College. The meeting starts at 1:30 PM. The speaker will be member Don Hultquist who will talk about "Searching for Swedish Ancestors, the Ancestral Home and Living Descendants." Their class will be on Probate Research and Deeds by member Nancy Krohn.

Local Businesses Support Our Newsletter

We'd like to thank all those local businesses who have responded to our call for support for the printing of the *Impressions*. We have received $300 from the following local businesses to co-sponsor one issue: Chelsea Milling, Robertson-Morrison, Dahlmann Properties, Beacon Investments, AATA, Bank of Ann Arbor, Detroit Edison and GT Products. Strategies Marketing and Design has contributed in kind. Other business patrons ($100) are Washtenaw Engineering, the John Leidy Shop, Koch and White, and Downtown Home and Garden. Thank you one and all for your valuable support!

November Sponsors

This month's sponsors are

Robertson-Morrison Heating and Cooling

and

Dennis Dahlmann

Happenings Around The County

Do you want to restore your historic house and get a tax credit against your state income tax? On Thursday, November 18th, the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission is hosting a tax credit workshop to discuss the new law providing these incentives. It will be at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District's Administration Building at 1819 S. Wagner Road from 7-9 PM. The workshop is open to the public, is free and refreshments will be served at 6:30 P.M. If interested, please RSVP to Chris Watkins at 994-2435. For more information call Ina Hanel at 994-8293.

The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission is also seeking qualified applicants to serve on the Commission. Anyone who is interested can call Ina or mail a resume with cover letter to Tammy Richards, Washtenaw County Administration Building, 220 N. Main St., PO Box 8645, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.

How To Join

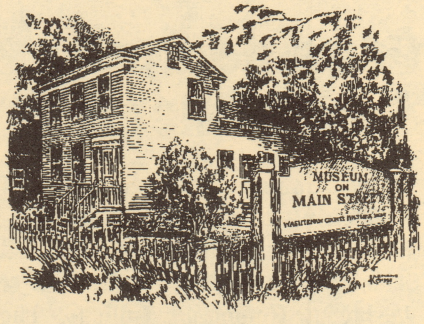
Send name, address and phone number with check payable to WCHS to: Treasurer, WCHS, P O Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336. Annual dues are individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100. For information call 734-662-9092.

Detroit Observatory Has Lectures & Open Houses

The Detroit Observatory was re-opened this past spring after a complete restoration under the guidance of Quinn/Evans architects. It is the winner of the prestigious 1999 Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History and was named Preservation Project of the year by the Historic District Commission of Ann Arbor. Director Patricia Whitesell has begun a series of lectures, the next being December 7 by Matthew Linke, Planetarium Director of the UM Exhibit Museum. It will feature a winter sky preview with planets, bright stars and constellations projected on the Observatory library's ceiling. This is part of a planned monthly lecture series. In addition, the 1854 Observatory will be open once a month. Next dates are November 18 and December 16. Call 763-2230 for more information or to arrange for tours for children or groups.

Oaks Boards Available

We have 20-30 oak boards about 6-8 feet long and 1/1/2 inches thick. Anyone interested could have them for a donation to the Museum Fund.



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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WCHS Program Schedule November 1999 - June 2000

Mark your Calendars for our future programs. All programs are on the third Sunday of the month from 2-4 PM and are free and open to the public. No lectures are planned for December and January.

Sunday November 21,1999

Professor Ted Ligibel of EMU will be discussing **Ford's Village Industries**. This is the second in a third-part series about Ford. Location TBA by post card.

Sunday February 20, 2000

Mary Culver, Ann Arbor's new Historic Preservation Coordinator, will speak on **Harry Bennett: Hatchet Man, Architect, Artist and Animal Lover**. This talk will be held at the Ypsilanti UAW Union Hall. Ms. Culver will talk about the fascinating Harry Bennett, Henry Ford's hired thug and right hand man and builder of the mysterious 'castle' on the Huron River.

Sunday March 20, 2000

Joe O'Neal will take us on a tour of his **Collection of Argus cameras** and optical devices located in the former Argus factory at 401 Fourth St (at William). O'Neal became fascinated with these products after he moved his successful construction company into the former Argus factory on the Old West Side. The collection has grown so large that he now has his own small museum, which he will share with us in a personal guided tour.

Saturday April 5, 2000

We are hoping to have another **Antiques Appraisal** by the DuMouchelles Gallery on this date. We will keep you posted.

Sunday April 16, 2000

Grace Shackman, local writer and historian, will lecture on Michigan architect **Alden Dow in Ann Arbor**. Though best known for his work in Midland, Dow had a strong connection to Ann Arbor through friends and clients including his sister Margaret Dow and her husband Harry Towsley. Shackman's slide tour of Dow's local work will be shown in the comfort of the new auditorium at one of his later works-Greenhills School.

Wednesday May 17, 2000

Annual Meeting and Potluck will be held at the Chelsea Depot at 6:00 PM. We will hear about the **History of the Chelsea Milling Company** by Howard S. "Howdy" Holmes after stuffing ourselves with the usual feast. Holmes will tell us about the famous Jiffy Mix Company his father founded in Chelsea.

Saturday June 3, 2000

A **van trip to Midland, Michigan** will leave at 9 a.m. and return at 6 p.m. The cost will be $40/person and there will be a limit of 30 people. We will tour the Alden Dow Home and Studio and enjoy a box lunch in the living room of this lovely home. We will visit the home of his parents, Herbert and Grace Dow, which is next door. We end the day with a stroll through the beautiful Dow Gardens. Depending on the number of subscribers we will take one or two 15-person comfortable vans for the two-hour drive to Midland. Refreshments will be provided on the morning trip and a brief comfort stop will be made both going and returning.